

The Visitant, &c.

INSTRUCTION FROM THE

GRAVE:

In which are unfolded the behaviour, sentiments, and prospects of persons of different ranks, characters, and situations, in their Dying Moments.

VIEWING the poor remains of those who once were dear to us, a truth, important to be remembered, sounds in the ear, and impresses the heart—"Man that is born of a woman, is of a few days, and full of trouble.—He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down.—He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." He walks in a vain show. The Pageant moves forward, and disappears.—The son takes the place of the father, this generation of the former generation.—Where is Adam and his immediate descendants? Noah and the first settlers of the earth? The thousand thousands who were members of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman empires? They have passed. The place which once knew them knows them no more. Their names are erased from the catalogue of the living.

I look upon the body of a departed friend:—It is a lump of cold inanimate clay; a substance vile and perishable; which the worm shall devour, corruption shall waste, and time wear out.—But the spirit, the inhabitant of that body:—Is it also a lump of cold and inanimate clay; a substance vile and perishable; which the worm shall devour, corrup,

tion shall waste, and time reduce and wear out?—No; It is an immaterial and immortal substance; a fire which shall never be extinguished. Like him, whose image it originally bore, it possesses an endless existence. But where the symptom of its presence here?—It is not here. Having escaped from its earthly prison, and burst asunder the oppressive fetter, it has returned to God, who assigns to each separate spirit his place and portion in the unseen country to which it has removed.

This world is not intended for a final abode: We are here in a sojourning state. Eighty years is the boundary which few reach, and very few exceed. Must all die? And may they die at any stage of life, and under any circumstance? Can there be no exception? May not pleas be urged to delay the stroke, or ward it entirely off? Can youth and beauty—the affectionate heart, and amiable manners—conduct so affable, so pious, so kind, as to excite in friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, the most endearing attachment, be of no avail? Must such be cut off, and leave a blank on earth?—Yes—The decree is gone forth, and cannot be altered. “Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.” But why repine? Is not infancy preferable to the preceding state? Is not the improvement gradual until we attain a state of manhood? And does improvement stop here? Think not so meanly of your destination. The present state when most improved, is the beginning only of existence. At death we spring into life; what is mortal is thrown off, and what is immortal remains. The christian who has escaped has a great advantage over those whom he has left behind. He is in a better world; a spirit made perfect; associated with celestial beings. But we are in a wilderness; imperfect creatures; associated with a world lying in wickedness. Take shelter from the stormy blast under the Redeemer’s shadow. Believe the gospel. It teaches you how to live, and how to die. It abates, for the present, the severity of trial; and secures, for the future, approbation and triumph.

Hope and fear, forebodings of good and evil, excited in a manner we know not how, sometimes rouse the soul and leave indelible impressions. Are not these evidences of the native dignity of the soul, which anticipates a separate state with different feelings, as the views of an agreeable or gloomy nature are more or less distinct. Warning was once given during public worship:—“Some within hearing shall soon be

summoned hence; let them prepare for that summons."— Those who preside in worship, may safely on all occasions give such warning, and in the same language. We are always in danger. Death eyes his prey, and waits for the permission only to seize without distinction whoever may be put within his power. The warning might have been given on general principles, without pretending to a prophetic spirit; but it struck conviction upon the mind of one who was young, healthy, and amiable. I am the person—I shall soon sicken and die! She was not mistaken; her days indeed were numbered. Soon after she did sicken and did die. The death of this amiable youth excited in a companion feelings uncommonly strong and tender. It reached her very heart. She considered her own departure as at hand; and, after a short interval, also disappeared. This was an awful period to the young. A sharp blast sweeping the field, withered many opening flowers. The two who were gone, had been the intimates and companions of a third, who one night in a dream beheld an enchanting place, where were a company of blooming virgins arrayed in white, happy beyond expression, among whom her late friends were recognized, who beckoned for her to come and join their company. The dream was repeated, leaving the strongest assurance of what the event verified, that she should no longer remain in the mortal state. In each of these instances there was an anticipation of an immediate removal from this to another world. How comes the mind by such anticipations? Not by reflection, for the impulse by which they are produced was sudden; not from sympathy, for it was felt in retirement; not from an over-heated imagination, for it operated in the coolest moments. I am apt to think that some friendly spirit makes these impressions to prepare the soul for the hour of trial.

Those who are conversant with scenes of sickness and of death, must have observed the different behaviour of persons of different characters at that awful period.

Ignorance and error, especially when wilful and obstinate, divert the attention from approaching ruin, "I have been a good neighbor and a good citizen." is sometimes the language, when the fact was they had little to boast of in these respects. "I know no considerable failure in any of the relative duties; I owe no man any ill-will; I cannot doubt of being perfectly safe." What a miserable dependence! No account is made of their duty to God, or should they have en-

aged in occasional acts of worship, a spiritual and a pure mind was never once thought of. How ignorant such are of themselves: how ignorant of what God's law demands! Surely they take shelter in a refuge of lies. It is expressly declared concerning even attainments to which they can have no pretention, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Persons who have broken asunder the bands of religion, and cast these from them; who suppress the admonitions of conscience, and resisted the strivings of God's spirit; indulging in an irreligious, dissipated, profane course, have been known to brave it to the last; jesting with serious things at the intervals of ease; or, blaspheming the God of Heaven under their torments. Such cases have fallen under my own notice, and a more striking resemblance of what may be supposed to occur in the regions of despair could not be exhibited on earth. Such a wretch accused the providence of God, that being in health, he was poor, but amassing riches, sickness prevented him from enjoying that wealth on which he had set his heart. I have seen such, who spake with the utmost levity of future things, giving the fictions of the Heathen a preference to the discoveries of the Christian; and wasting the hours in which they ought to have prepared for death, in speculations of the most wild and romantic kind. Awakened for a moment, to better thoughts by excruciating pain, the expressions were rash and presumptuous.—"To what purpose is all this: were I recovered to wonted health, I should lead the same life I have hitherto led." Hearts so unrelenting are uncommon. Instances of this kind are permitted to occur, that the inveteracy of a sinful course, and its fatal consequences, might be brought fully into view. It fulfils the scripture, that sinners grown old in sin are accursed. Being joined to their idols, they are let alone. They rush heedlessly into eternity, and will believe no danger before they awake in hell.

The evil day, and the year in which men have no pleasure generally strike terror to the heart. "Where," was the dying expression of one who had lived without God in the world. "Where," (amazement was visible in his countenance) "O where am I now going!"—Scarce had these agonizing expressions escaped, when he was no more. Some feel that by guilt the penalty of a broken law is incurred. The day of

grace has been abused—the accepted time has passed over without improvement. Bitter is the complaint,—“My obdurate heart will not now relent; I have provoked God’s spirit, and he is gone; I resisted his striving with me, and he will strive with me no more. Horrible! inexpressibly horrible!—for me is reserved the blackness of darkness!” To witness such distress, expressed in such language, may well soften the hardest heart, and awake the most tender sympathy. But alas! When God has given up a sinner, unavailing is every effort for his relief. It is seldom that a case so desperate ever occurs, and when it does occur, it is meant to warn survivors against trifling with serious things, or putting off the moment of mercy, which, when once passed, can never be recalled.

Many who have abused the best and most improved natural powers to revile the religion of Jesus, and overwhelm its professors with contempt, have found their opposition recoiling with irresistible violence upon themselves. Julian, the apostate, was compelled, with a reluctant heart, to exclaim, in his expiring moments, “Thou hast overcome, O Galilean.” His haughty spirit was overawed—the king of Zion, whom he madly opposed, now ruled him with a rod of iron, and dashed him in pieces as a potter’s vessel. Voltaire, who prostituted his life to the service of infidelity, is generally believed, when dying, to have sought ease from upbraidings of mind, which he could not bear, in the most childish and unwarranted superstitions. Among the multitudes whose irreligious, loose, and daring principles have exposed them to the most intolerable agonies, some have at the last, not only confessed their folly, but have become real converts to that religion which it had been the business of their lives to ridicule and pervert. Of this class was the celebrated Rochester.—Light broke in upon his mind; his whole nature was changed and sanctified; over him the grace of God gained a complete and a glorious triumph.

A sudden death surprises the best, and awakes their fears and apprehensions before the mind can collect its force, and wield with efficacy the christian armour. Their sun has been known to set in darkness, even when there was every reason to believe that it should arise unclouded in a better world. Flesh and blood are appalled at the unexpected approach of the king of terrors. It requires a mind strengthened by the power of God, and borne up by the faith and hopes of the gospel, to meet death with becoming decency and composure.

Instances might be produced of persons of the strongest minds, venerable for their years and character, their office and public services, who in the close of life have been cast into a furnace exceedingly heated; tossed with temptation; buffeted by Satan; and dreadfully harrassed. The struggle has been severe, tedious, and doubtful; but they overcame, through the blood of Jesus; and with brightened countenances and triumphant hearts have retired to that rest which remains for the people of God.

I believe it will universally be found, that distinct and impressive views of the grace of the gospel, which have been improved, and are firmly relied upon, never fail of smoothing the passage through the gloomy vale, and procuring a complete conquest over the fears of death. Many witnesses confirm this truth. I shall single out two, as sufficient for my present purpose.

An officer of the British army, of a volatile disposition, and dissipated turn, was taught wisdom in the school of affliction. Sickness of two years continuance, was the mean used by God to bring him to a sober mind. In an interesting conversation with him before his death, he expressed the utmost abhorrence of his former courses, and full reliance on the mercy of God. When demanded what ground he had for such reliance, he earnestly replied—the promise of God, pledged to sinners in his word. He was in some perplexity concerning the nature of the new-birth. Assured that aversion to sin; that breathings after holiness; that hope in God, were certain evidences of the change which that metaphor is intended to represent; and that the spirit of God alone could excite such aversion—such breathing—such hope. He was much relieved, possessing these evidences of a renewed nature; and continued in a calm, hopeful, devout frame, until he expired.

A promising youth, whose death has suggested these reflections, died in such manner as shews that the grace of God can loosen the attachment even of the young to this life, and introduce them in triumph to the life to come.

We are all naturally in a state of enmity to God, neither subject to his law, nor until that change spoken of in scripture (as a *conversion*, a *new birth*, a *resurrection from the dead*) takes place through the energy of God's spirit, ever likely to be so. Where a corrupt bias has received no effectual restraint or that restraint has been overborne; where men have acquired habits of forgetting God, of indulging the flesh, and loving the world; and these habits have become strong and inveterate, I cannot for a moment doubt, whether such may not be able to give an exact account of the period when some suggestion, some word of power, some awful providence stopt them in their mad career, and turned their feet into the path of peace: but children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; who have listened to instruction, and put it in practice, may find the principles and tendencies of nature contrary to a life of godliness gradually removed, and opposite principles and tendencies fully established. The triumphs of grace are as evident in cases of this kind as in any other.—Such grow up as calves in the stall; their delight in God, and trust in the Saviour; their love of holiness, and good-will to all men, are evidences to themselves and to others, of a more unquestionable kind than what can possibly arise from the strongest bodily affection, that they are the sons of God and the heirs of Heaven. I believe this to have been precisely the case of that amiable youth of whom I speak. The blessing of God upon the religious education which he had enjoyed, and upon his improvement thereof, effected that great change in his heart and life so essential to his entering into the kingdom of Heaven. Religion, from his infancy, had taken full possession of his mind: never was he known to neglect prayer to God morning or evening: he strictly observed the sabbath; and took pleasure in public worship.—His life, unstained by prevailing vices, was engaging and exemplary. No wonder that he was the darling of his parents, and in favour with all who knew him. He had for many months been in a declining state of health, which excited a peculiar concern for his eternal welfare. He was sensible that he must be renewed and sanctified before he could get to Heaven, without being able to pronounce that this was indeed the case. The christian frame is variable. The comfort of religion, even where it has real possession of the soul, may not always be enjoyed. Was Isaiah overwhelmed at the discovery of the Divine Majesty—"woe is me; I am undone; I

am a man of unclean lips?" Did David pray "create in me a clean heart O God; renew a right spirit within me?"—And the apostle Paul use the utmost caution, diffidently referring himself to the final decision of God without presuming to rest on his own—"With me" (his words are remarkable) "with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; *yea I judge not mine own self*, but he that judgeth me is God?" And can we be surprised, keeping in mind the perplexities with which the most distinguished of God's children have on trying occasions been oppressed, that others whose attainments are by no means so eminent, should enter the valley and shadow of death with a trembling heart and misgiving thoughts?

Sad indeed were the last days of our dear young friend.—By the bursting of a blood vessel, attended with great difficulty in breathing, which rendered it impossible to rest by day or by night, he endured excruciating pain in body, whilst his mind was a prey to gloomy and painful apprehensions. At every interval of ease he was entirely engaged with divine things, receiving with gratitude and advantage great assistance from the conversation and prayers of his worthy pastor. So submissive was he to the will of his Heavenly Father, that the most agonizing pain produced no complaint, nor even the least murmur. The night previously to his departure he enjoyed a refreshing sleep, and began to breathe freely. He awoke in a composed praying frame, continuing in constant prayer for some hours. God did not "hide his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard." It was the moment of triumph. No longer was he harrassed with perplexity, nor assaulted with temptation. The love of God filled his soul—Death lost his terrors. He was even anxious to be gone, exclaiming "come Lord Jesus, come quickly; I would not remain on earth for ten thousand worlds!"

The tears of his parents drew his attention.—He put one hand on each, and embracing them, said "Do not weep; I cannot weep, I am full of joy, I have no pain.—Is this death? Is this dying? I never felt better in all my life. In a little time I shall see you both again." He took an affectionate leave of his friends who were present, reminding them of their duty; and desired in parting with his little favourite niece, that she should convey his love to his absent sister, and his hope of meeting her in a better world.

After shutting his eyes for a moment, he sprung up, exclaiming "Oh I saw him coming for me, but I have lost sight of him; he will soon return!" In prayer to God, and in his praise, he continued, until being entirely exhausted, he lay down; and, with his eyes fixed on Heaven, and his lips in motion, without the least groan or struggle he went to eternal rest.

This awful, pleasing scene, made impressions on the beholders, which cannot soon be forgotten. Their tears were tears of joy. The presence of God brightened the countenances of the friends of Jesus: controlled the violence of natural affection, and abashed the king of terrors, who fled in dismay foiled even by a stripling opposing him in the name of the Prince of Peace. Heaven appeared to have descended upon earth. All and each were ready to sing the new song—"Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and has redeemed us by thy blood; out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The different facts which I have now stated without any disguise or exaggeration, strongly establish some important truths.

Are we not so constituted, that none can get clear of apprehensions that the soul shall survive the dissolution of the body, and exist in a separate state? Of these apprehensions, the most ignorant and the best informed; persons of regular and irregular lives; by whom a separate state is desired, and by whom it is dreaded, cannot entirely divest themselves. They may for a time deride these apprehensions, and in the darkness of vain speculation lose sight of them; but the hour of danger, and the moment of death, spoil their mirth, and convince them to their terror, of a truth which they have anxiously attempted to evade, and to keep out of view. It is impossible they can ever be assured that what is so agreeable to the natural desires of the soul; what has been universally admitted by men of all nations, and in every age, and is confirmed by the whole weight of scripture, is, or can be either false or nugatory.

Few, perhaps none, are able entirely, and at all times, to resist the dread of death. Death is clothed with terrors which discompose, stagger, and overwhelm the most bold and resolute. The law of God arms death with that sting, the poison whereof drinketh up the spirit. The innocent are free from alarm, but none of the sons of Adam are innocent. Fear is

the offspring of guilt ; and guilt, in a greater or less degree, is attached to the best on earth. Hezekiah at the approach of death was oppressed, and in great bitterness ; and the Disciples in jeopardy felt dreadful consternation, calling upon Jesus, " Master, Master, we perish !" Through fear of death, some are all their life-time subject to bondage. The sinfulness of our nature, and the infirmities of which God's own people are conscious, leave them often a prey to uneasy, and even agonizing feelings. These feelings are common, with others, to persons of the strongest minds, and of the most upright conduct : they arise from the imperfection of the human character, and cannot be avoided whilst any degree of imperfection remains. In most instances the first approaches of death are terrible. It is not against flesh and blood we then wrestle, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, we need the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand, in the evil day. Girded with truth, and defended with righteousness ; shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and sheltered under the shield of faith ; wielding the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God ; and praying always with all prayer, the enemy shall not prevail : Omnipotence on our side shall overpower any force, however mighty, however numerous, however artful, which can be brought against us.

There is a time to die, to which we are all appointed. We totter on the brink of the grave, and may any moment fall in. A vast proportion of the human race are cut off in infancy, great numbers in youth, many in manhood, and a few after having reached old age. Numbering our days, let us apply our hearts to wisdom, prepare for the evil day, and for the year when you can expect no pleasure.

To infants no instruction can be given. It may not, however be unreasonable, to bring in view some passages of scripture, from whence parents, mourning the loss of their infant offspring, may derive hope. What means that passage—" The promise is to you and to *your children*." To Christ, foretold from the beginning, and in the fulness of time accomplishing the work which he had undertaken, "*the promise*," a term often used in the New-Testament, is generally applicable. In him the promises are yea and amen—with him the new covenant has been established ; and through him, as the channel, the blessings thereof flow to our guilty race. That he should

be made flesh, and dwell among us ; that he should die, and rise again ; that the Holy Ghost, in consequence of his death and resurrection, should descend and abide with men on earth, surprising them with his gifts, and enriching them with his grace, is "*The promise*?" immediately spoken of in the passage which I have now produced. Had not Christ interposed in our behalf, the whole human race, without any exception, root and branch, infant and adult, young and old, had inevitably perished—but his death revives our hope. Were infants incapable of receiving benefit from his death, none of them could be saved. But the thought is equally abhorrent to scripture, as it is to every tender feeling. Christ, the unspeakable gift of God, and the immediate subject of the promise, is the saviour of the child, as well as of the parent. Children have been considered in the covenant of grace, and provision has been made for their renovation and happiness, and they are admitted to baptism, in token of this delightful truth, that the blood of Jesus has efficacy to wash away thier original guilt, and his spirit to renew and sanctify their natures.

What says the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah ? He says, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping ; Rachael weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Thus saith the Lord—"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. "And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

Does God notice and reward the care with which parents watch over their infant charge ? Is death an enemy who has led them captive to a gloomy land ? But is it not here promised that they shall be rescued from the hand of the enemy, and put in possession of that immortality, the inheritance originally intended for Adam and his sons ? In hopes that this promise shall be accomplished, let the afflicted parent refrain her voice from weeping, and her eyes from tears.

When Job recovered his losses, it is particularly marked that all his stock was doubled, but he continued as before to have seven sons and three daughters, of which the Jewish commentators give this account—that his children, although dead, were not lost as his other possessions were, but would in due time be restored to him again.

Assured that infants are thought of in the covenant of grace, and shall escape from the power of death, let not parents mourn as those who have no hope, but without a murmuring word comply with the command of the gracious Redeemer—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

It may be in pity to the human race, that such a proportion are removed in infancy, whereby they are secured against temptation, and escape the multiplied sorrows under which survivors groan. Few and evil are men's days on earth, attended with trouble, and hastening to a period. Is there no hiding-place from the wind, nor covert from the tempest; no rivers of water to refresh the dry ground, nor great rock under whose shadow we may take shelter in a weary land. The work of righteousness, in consequence of his spirit poured upon us from on high, is peace, and the effect of righteousness, is quietness, and assurance for ever. His people dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

That grace, which the scripture unfolds, illustrates, and enforces is the procuring cause of peace on earth and good will towards men, and alone can control our fears, give support in the day of trial, and at last afford a complete triumph over sin and death. The statement in scripture on this subject is perfectly plain, but through the natural darkness and pride of the heart is not discerned; nor will men receive as a favor what they would demand as a reward. The prevalence of such darkness and pride is the leading characteristic of the unregenerate; but upon the regenerate, light breaks forth, and they yield the most entire and cheerful submission to the will of God. This is the precise boundary between the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of satan: *Here a state of nature ends—There a state of grace begins.*

God entered into engagements with his own son, let the son assume human nature; in that nature let him give obedience to the law which men had transgressed; the offender, through his merit and energy shall be forgiven, shall be renewed, and again put in full possession of that immortality which he had forfeited. The son complied with his engagements, and claims as his reward, that the guilty may be rescued from ruin: his claim is admitted, and all power in heaven and on earth is entrusted with him, that he may carry his kind designs into complete effect. His Gospel is addres-

sed to all the world, inviting and commanding each of the human race to trust in him for salvation: whenever this invitation and this command is listened unto, and complied with, men are as certain of mercy and of grace as the word and the oath of God can make them.

That a divine power is necessary to incline and to strengthen man to listen to the invitation, and to obey the command on which their safety depends, is not to be denied; but such grace is afforded to men as improved, would issue in their complete recovery, and shall render their final rejection of the gospel altogether inexcusable.—God's spirit in this view is said to strive with the wicked; light is afforded them in different degrees; they are restrained from running all the lengths to which they would otherwise proceed in an evil course—but resisting the strivings of God's spirit; shutting their eyes against the light; and breaking through every restraint, they are given up of God, and left to wander and to perish.

May not the circumstances of the Antediluvians, with whom God's spirit strove for many years; of Herod the King, who was inclined to hear gladly the instructions of John the Baptist, and to do many things in conformity to these instructions; of those Hebrews who received not only the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, but were also so far illuminated, that for a time they took pleasure in the truths of the gospel, and felt their influence on conduct; may not these circumstances be recollected as an illustration of this subject? Notwithstanding the advantages arising from warning and forbearance; from divine influences and grace; from clear light and full conviction, they persevered in an evil course; grew worse and worse; and finally apostatized from the faith. Shall not the grace, which through their perversion and abuse was received in vain, leave them speechless when arraigned before the bar of God?

Meditation and prayer; reading the word, and attending the ordinances of divine appointment, attempts to do well, begun, followed up, and persevered in, mark the path of duty in which alone we can expect the divine blessing, and the communications of grace which are of an effectual and saving nature.—Proceeding in this path, it shines more and more, unto the perfect day; our own demerit and weakness become evident; leading us to ascribe every good disposition, and every good act to the spirit of God, and to place the most firm and entire dependence on the great Redeemer.

The new nature is gradually unfolded in a humble and spiritual, a loving and obedient, a patient and submissive temper: renouncing all merit on our part, and giving to the Redeemer the whole glory of rescuing and of saving an undone criminal from deserved ruin. By whatever means men are brought to rest on Christ for salvation, when this once becomes the cheerful and resolute act, it is attended with peace and with safety.

Hopes derived from our own feelings, or our own exertions; from any affection of body, or any frame of mind; from what we either have done, or can do, shall most assuredly disappoint us; our feelings are variable and our exertions feeble; the affections of the body and the frame of the mind often depend on circumstances which have no immediate connection with religion; or which, at least, cannot evidence its seat in the heart; nothing we have done, or even can do, either merit the favour of God, or are an equivalent for eternal life. Men deceive themselves who depend in whole or in part, on any or on all of these things, to procure acceptance: they build on a foundation of sand; and, to use the Apostle's language, are "fallen from grace." But hopes derived from Christ alone cannot make men ashamed:—His power, his faithfulness, his grace, are ever the same:—He changeth not: great is their consolation who fly to him as their refuge: God is reconciled to them: sin has lost its dominion over them: death has no sting to injure them—nor the grave power to detain them prisoners.—It is Christ's will, that where he is, there they should also be.

Pretensions, however plausible, are much to be suspected which contract the mind and alienate the affections; exciting violent attachment to this or that separating names whilst love waxeth cold.—Such act as men; and have no evidence to themselves, and give none to the world that they are spiritual. The faith of Christ, unmixed with human infirmity, unites all hearts in the strongest manner; whilst this is not the case, it shews that the best are sanctified in part only: but let Christians go on to perfection, as they advance, the heart will enlarge, and burn with love to all men, especially to the household of faith.

A steady reliance on Christ is what alone can support the dying, and introduce them in triumph to a better world. Men in danger catch at any thing; but they are left in perplexity

and terror until they give all up, and rest on the rock of ages. This may account for the darkness and suspense in which the dying are often held: they enquire after their faith and repentance: this act of obedience, or that, to which they may attach some merit, and in which they may place some confidence: it is the last struggle with the body of sin and death; for however necessary faith, repentance and new obedience be, they are not our saviours; where they do exist, they are given from God, and ought to excite our gratitude; but must not be offered as a price to procure the reward. It is the triumph of grace to bring us off from all dependence on these, to depend on him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood: the moment that this is effected, the christian shouts for joy; he stands on firm ground; he is equally sheltered against the accusations of his own mind, or the condemning sentence of the broken law. Great is his confidence: —“ If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared
 “ not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how, shall
 “ he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall
 “ la any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that
 “ justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that
 “ died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the
 “ right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.
 “ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tri-
 “ bulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or naked-
 “ ness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘ For thy sake
 “ we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep
 “ for the slaughter.’—Nay, in all these things we are more
 “ than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am
 “ persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor prin-
 “ cipalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to
 “ come, nor height, nor depth, any other creature, shall be
 “ able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ
 “ Jesus our Lord.”

THE WEATHER

UNTIL the beginning of January, was uncommonly mild and pleasant, since then, now five weeks, an extreme cold has been experienced, which must long be remembered from the effects; in some instances the effects have been fatal; in many instances the cry for bread and fuel has been loud: whilst those who are sheltered from the stormy blast, and have abundance have been excited to warm the naked, to feed the hungry, and to minister to the sick.

Individuals have done much, but societies uniting their efforts have done more: their exertions ought not to be concealed. The example may teach others; it is light which put under a bushel is lost; but which put on a candlestick illuminates a benighted world.

The object of the individual, or of individuals united in societies, is the same; the good deeds of the one may be presented to the eye; and the good deeds of the other may reach the ear; if good be done, I rejoice; one does good one way, another, in a different way; I am willing to give each all the credit they may claim; and to speak of *them* with respect and honour, from the assurance, that a good deed dying tongueless kills a thousand.

We have seen the sad effects of cold in a letter from Greensburg, Pennsylvania, dated January 25, 1817. "On Monday evening last, James Black, stage driver, while driving the mail stage south west of this place, on the road to Pittsburg, was frozen to death and fell from his seat. This distressing event took place about day break, and the horses going on correctly as usual, he was not missed by the passengers in the stage until they had proceeded two and half miles from the spot where he fell, nor until they were hailed by a person who had discovered the dead body, and followed them with the information."

It is equally melancholy to relate, that a lady of respectable family and connections in this neighbourhood, in a fit of insanity, unknown to her friends, had left her bed, on one

of the severest nights during this season, and before her escape was known had suffered so much by the cold, that she soon expired.

Many in town were pining through exposure and want, and must have perished had not seasonable aid been afforded.

The more immediate organs of relief are the overseers of the poor, but many cases must of necessity be concealed from them; these have claimed the notice of two societies, which consisting of females, can more feelingly sympathize with the afflicted and more effectually administer to their relief.

The female Episcopal Benevolent Society have administered to the temporal and spiritual wants of many. They have purchased and delivered wood, blankets and provisions. They have nursed the sick, procured for them medicine, and read to them the scripture, doing what was in their power to promote their comfort. Their works praise them, and they may expect a reward.

The Female Onesimus Society, originated in the Presbyterian church, at a moment when the religious feeling among our young females was strongly excited, and had no view at first but to cherish and direct these feelings, by reading the scripture, and celebrating the praises of redeeming love: but out of this arose a desire to be useful to others, in a manner most in their power, by making garments for the naked, no sooner was the suggestion made than it was carried into effect. They applied to their friends for money to procure materials, the application put a considerable fund into their hands, whereby they have been enabled to make three hundred garments. Their funds were exhausted, but much was yet to be done, they thought of a Charity-Sermon, and requested Mr. Elias Harrison for this purpose, who readily complied. Thus their labours have been continued, a sum beyond what they had any reason to expect being afforded. A copy of the sermon is here given, as a memorial of the labours of the society: and of the estimation in which these labours are held by the church and the community at large.

PHILEMON, VERSE 10, MIDDLE CLAUSE.

"ONESIMUS."

BRETHREN,

How inestimably valuable is the gospel of Christ! How consoling its doctrines, how lovely, how benevolent its precepts! Scrutinize the volumes of antiquity—penetrate the repositories of science, in every age—and collect into one mass, the combined wisdom of the world and to what does it all amount? Not a single ray of comfort does it impart to the desponding bosom—not a tear does it dry from the eye of the afflicted. The troubled billows of life continue to roll on without a remedy—the silent habitations of the dead, are still dark, cheerless, and uninviting.

Unenlightened by the illuminating influence of the gospel of Christ, the most stupendous human talents, have not unfrequently proved to the world, a conspicuous, a tremendous curse. What was a Plato, a Socrates, a Cicero, or a Seneca, compared with the unlettered fishermen of Galilee—the apostles of our Redeemer? What, but as the faint glimmerings of the glow-worm, to the glittering effulgence of the noon-day sun. I am unwilling to affirm that they died, as the brute dieth; but I mean little more when I say that they lived, and died like great heathen philosophers. Their exalted talents could never make the current of life flow uniformly even; their profound research, could never make death, less than the king of terrors:—and their philosophical speculations could never make the grave, other than a cheerless, gloomy, mansion. All beyond it, was still a land of darkness—an extended field of uncertainty and doubt.

And what were the moral precepts which they inculcated? Multitudinous in number—contradictory in sentiment—and often destructive and pernicious in practice. The diminutive concerns of ordinary life were thought too low to receive a passing glance from the soaring speculations of these heathen wonders. Like comets they rose, and sparkled, and glitter-

ed and excited the wondering gaze of an astonished world, for a season, and then like them they went away, without leaving much salutary influence behind. In them, the offending criminal, seldom found, a pardoning friend—in their moral precepts, the wretched poor seldom an advocate, seldom an accent of tenderness, or commiseration. And why was this? Because the day spring from on high, had never yet visited them:—the star of Jacob had not yet begun its revolution in their cheerless, moral hemisphere:—the Babe of Bethlehem had not yet commissioned his messengers of mercy.

Reverse the scene, contemplate for a moment the religion of Jesus. What are its doctrines, what its precepts? Peace on earth, and good will to man, is inscribed in effect on almost every page. How sweet how tender are its messages, to the heavy laden, heart broken sinner! Come unto me, are its cheering invitations, and I will give you rest. No sooner are its precious truths properly relished, and applied, than the trembling bosom ceases to throb with anxiety for the future—the cheek of the afflicted is no longer moistened with the tear of sorrow. Here no jarring sentiments—no contradictory principles, no pernicious doctrines, harrass the enquiring mind, or keep it suspended in painful uncertainty. All is uniform, harmonious, and instructive: dissipating the obscurities of the passed, and lightening up the prospects yet to come. To civilize, and enlighten, to soften the rough and fiercer passions of the soul—calm the angry tumult of the mind—smooth the pillow of distress, give fortitude, and resignation in the hour of danger, and of death, and to unfold to lost man the blessed prospects of a glorious immortality, are the wonderful offices it is destined to perform, and the happy effects which it invariably produces.

But whatever duties the precepts of the gospel is found to inculcate, its willing disciples, joyfully execute. To do good to our fellow creatures, to comfort the afflicted, and to pardon the penitent and returning offender, were duties, which our blessed Saviour, his apostles, and the primitive fathers frequently enjoined, and in the performance of which they themselves were illustrious examples. An instance of this, is exhibited in the conduct of the writer of this epistle, towards the person designated in the text. Wherever a fair opportunity of doing good presented itself to the Apostle Paul, the uniform, active benevolence, of his ardent soul, would never

let him rest till it was done. Thus it was, in the case before us. The person under consideration had been a servant to Philemon. But having robbed his master, as it has been supposed, to a considerable amount, in order to escape the stroke of vindictive justice which awaited him where he was, he had fled to Rome, that he might hide himself among the numberless multitudes of that crowded metropolis. But even here he could not rest. Taught, as he doubtless had been, by his pious master, in the principles of the religion of Jesus, he knew, that though it might be easy for him to escape the vigilance of men, yet, that he was at the same time, under the notice and inspection of the Omniscient God. From his all-seeing eye, he dare not hope to escape. Harrowed up, and tormented with the insupportable stings of a guilty conscience the trembling culprit directs his hesitating steps to the prison of his master's friend—the Apostle of the Gentiles. How highly interesting must have been the interview! Paul was a prisoner—the guilty servant of his beloved Philemon was before him. What should he do? seize him, as a culprit, and send him back to receive the punishment due to his offences? No, brethren; the heart of the Apostle yearned over him. He beheld him trembling, destitute, without a friend; and at the same time, bending beneath the burthen of conscious guilt. He pities him. Improving the favorable opportunity, this prisoner of Christ, probes him to the bottom—makes him still more sensible of the enormity of his offences: and then, smarting under his wounds, directs him to the blood of the Redeemer. Here the wretched sufferer finds a healing balm, for all his wounds. Released from the heavy burden, which had long been pressing on his heart, his countenance again assumes the smile of serenity and peace. And immediately from being a wandering fugitive from justice, he becomes, the faithful companion, the affectionate friend, the constant attendant, and the unwearied comforter of his beloved father in the Lord.

But he must return to his master. Conscious, that he had done wrong, and knowing that his master was actuated by those blessed precepts of christian benevolence, which enjoins pardon to the penitent, even though he should have offended seventy and seven times; he longs to return to throw himself at his feet, and to receive sweet accents of pardon, the benediction of one whom he had injured. To prepare him for this greatest of earthly blessings, the Apostle Paul, (to whom he

had now become dear, by ties of the tenderest as well as the strongest kind) writes and sends with him that short epistle, of which the text constitutes a part. He goes, and is received. Not indeed as a servant; but as an affectionate christian brother. How dark, brethren, and how mysterious are the ways of providence! How inscrutable the councils of Omnipotence. Who could have imagined, that this man who was once endeavoring to escape observation in the crowded streets of the mistress of the world, was destined, at no distant period, to shine as a star of the first magnitude? And yet, if we may believe the early writers of the christian church, (and we have no reason to disbelieve them,) he was soon after, not only an eminent bishop but a triumphant martyr to the glorious cause of his adored Saviour. His name was Onesimus.

Names brethren, though often arbitrary sounds, introduced by the consent of mankind, for mutual convenience, in order to distinguish one person, or object from another, are still however, not unfrequently, full of meaning. This was particularly the case, among the polished inhabitants of Greece. There scarcely an individual received a name, that was not expressive of some peculiar quality, which, either the individual then possessed, or which it was hoped he ultimately would possess. This was the case with the name of the person under consideration. Onesimus slightly varied, to make it suit the idiom of the English language—in the original signifies useful; how aptly it was applied in the present instance, you will all of you, after what has been said, be able to form a pretty tolerable estimate.

Having, now, introduced the occasion, and explained the meaning of the text; we shall proceed to deduce from it those observations which it may naturally suggest: and then apply the subject to the particular object contemplated by the discourse.

Brethren, to be useful in the world, is one of the objects, and when extensively considered, perhaps the only one, to which we were destined by the Author of our being, in placing us in it. But when I say it was perhaps the only one, I expect not to be misunderstood. The great end of our existence, and that which ought ever to be the actuating principle of our conduct in life, is the glory of Him by whom we were created, and to whose munificence, we are constantly indebted for every blessing we enjoy. Considered in this point of

view the text assumes an importance far beyond any thing which you have probably been accustomed to ascribe to it. It is however no more than what legitimately belongs to it: and therefore demands your serious attention. Look at the law of God, that perfect transcript of his own moral excellence? And to what does it amount? Summed up in the language of one who spake as never man spake, (and who was a much more competent judge of this matter than all the self styled philosophers of the world :) it is this, love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thy self. When therefore I speak of being useful, as one of the grand objects of our existence, I wish to be understood in this extended sense. It is not that narrow, contracted, worldly, selfish utility, which confines its views and operations, to the little circle of our connexions, or to the still more narrow boundary of self, that I would recommend to your attention. No, verily, brethren; usefulness of this description, has not unfrequently been the cause of more mischief to the world in half an age, than could in many others, be repaired. It is this selfish spirit, given scope, which lights the flame of civil discord—makes the angry nations rush together, on mutual destruction—and which is doubtless daily sending crowded multitudes to the damnation of hell.

That man, who ever expects to be extensively useful in this life, in the restricted sense of the word, must be actuated by principles far different from these. He must be so on gospel principles. In one word he must be a pious christian, filled with supreme love to his heavenly Father—with equal love to his neighbour, as himself. A peculiar advantage which the religion of the despised Jesus possesses over every other, is, that its principles are no sooner rooted in the heart, than they uniformly impel to actions dignified, noble, rational, and benevolent. In them, are comprehended, every thing that can add to a nations peace—every thing that can conduce to an individual happiness. That society where they are prevalent will ever exhibit a spectacle of benevolence and affection:—that individual who possesses them, will ever welcome you with a smile. Here the wandering stranger, finds a home—the wretched sufferer, a consoling friend—the distressed poor, a willing advocate.

Surely then brethren, if this be fact, (and that it is not fancy, I appeal to the word of God—to the uniform experience of ages, to your own experience as well as observation) if

these things are so, it evidently becomes your duty to extend to it your patronage, your smiles, and your encouragement wherever it may appear. This should be done not only to individuals, but to every association, founded upon this solid basis, and which professes to be regulated by its pious and benevolent principles. And it is the cause of such an institution brethren, that I am this morning occupying this sacred desk to plead before you. And I thank my God, that I am not addressing a people whose hearts are rankling with enmity against every thing that bears the name of Jesus, or whose bosoms are steeled to the piercing cries of the wretched poor. I thank God, that I am addressing a congregation, who are not only disposed to listen with attention, but to sympathize, to feel, to act.

You have already had many calls upon your benevolence, and were it not for the assurance that another was still necessary—that the cause in which I am at present engaged was a good cause, that it was imperiously demanded by the dreadful situation of many among you, and that it was sanctioned too, by the word of God; after what you have already done, I should really blush to make it. But when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth—when the hurricane or tempest, the pestilence, or famine, are carrying havoc and desolation, misery and want, into the habitations of those who were once crowned with abundance, and rejoicing in the smiles of quietude and peace; it becomes the imperious duty of those, who are beholding at a distance, the raging of the elements, not only to feel for their suffering fellow mortals, it also becomes them to act: and to act too with effect. Such a scene brethren is now witnessed among us. Added to the unusual inclemency of the season, and the general want of business among the lower orders of society; Almighty God, during the passed year, as a punishment to our polluted world has been sweeping down the fruits of the earth with the besom of destruction, so that many who were once, if not in a state of affluence, yet blessed with a competency of this world's goods, may now be seen, strolling the streets, pale with disease—emaciated with hunger; shivering in the winter's blast and with faltering accents, imploring the charity of their more favored neighbors.

To relieve, in some degree these multiplied calamities, these penetrating woes, which one would be induced to suppose were sufficient to melt a heart of adamant; a society has been formed: not like those transitory associations, esta-

lished for the promotion of sensual pleasure, without being designed for any valuable purpose. No brethren; constituted of the fairest as well as the most interesting portion of God's creation—the younger females of your community; its object is noble and benevolent—its action interesting, and lovely. Its name, I need hardly tell you, is the same as that which I have taken for my text: and from its name it will be easy for you to deduce its object,—*useful*: useful to themselves, and useful to others.

The spirit of the living God moved upon them. Being made sensible that like, the servant of Philemon, they had robbed their master—robbed God, of much of that precious time which he had given them for valuable purposes, and that to escape his observation they had run far away from him; being made sensible of this, by that same spirit which wrought upon the heart of Onesimus of old, they were like him solicitous to return; and uniting on some common principles to be useful to themselves and useful to others.

But whence were these principles to be deduced? Not from the boasted speculations of the Heathen philosophers, or from the more subtle metaphysics of modern infidels: no, brethren they are only to be found, in this book of God. This was consulted—this was chosen. Happy selection! Blessed choice! It was this, that altered the views of the servant of Philemon—this, that made him glitter in the church as a star of superior lustre:—this, that made him a triumphant martyr to the cause of his Redeemer: and it is upon this circumstance, my young friends, of your being guided by its sacred principles, that I am resting all my hopes, not only of your being extensively useful, but of the very existence of your institution. It is the very foundation of your society—let this be removed, and the superstructure which you have built upon it will sooner or later, crumble into ruins. I entreat you, therefore, as you value your institution—as you value the important, the benevolent objects it embraces, never to let go from you this precious treasure—this book of God. Cling to it, as your last resource—your best your only hope and you cannot fail of obtaining the object which you have in contemplation.

Christian brethren, do you consider it a duty to read the word of God—to meditate upon its precious truths—to chaunt the anthem of praise to your Redeemer, to meet frequently to converse on those subjects, which are full of everlasting interest! I know you do. And have you never felt your hearts melting within you, and the fire of divine love beginning to

Kindle in your bosoms, while thus engaged? And do you not conceive it your duty to approve with your smiles and your benediction, a disposition of this description, wherever it may appear? Bless, then, with your encouragement, that institution, whose cause I am now pleading before you: for this is one of its principal objects.

Parents, when you look around upon that interesting group of flourishing immortals, which compose your domestic circle—those lovely children of your affection, do you not frequently feel your bosoms throbbing with painful anxiety for their future destiny? Is it not the ardent desire of your souls, your constant prayer to God, that they should grow, lovely as the tree by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf withers not?—that they cultivate among the endearing circle of their companions in early life the heavenly spirit of tenderness, benevolence, and affection—that spirit of love to one another, of industry, and of active humanity, which shall prepare them to go forth on the busy, tumultuous theatre, of active life, with usefulness and credit to themselves, and at the same time with much comfort and consolation to you? Yes, parents, if your hearts are not steeled to the calls of nature, I know that these feelings and these desires, are frequently passing in crowded succession through your agitated bosoms. Give then your countenance, your assistance, to an institution, which embrace this too, as one of its important objects.—This lovely spirit, which I pray God, they may not only ever cultivate, but for ever practice.

But even this is not all. No brethren, one other object still remains. One, if not more important, certainly in the present state of things, much more interesting. It is to relieve the urgent necessities of the suffering poor:—to gladden by their munificence the vale of poverty and woe. To affect this godlike purpose, they have hovered around like the angel of mercy,—they have penetrated the cheerless abodes of the wretched. They have made themselves acquainted with misery, and want, and woe. They have witnessed scenes, which were sufficient to make the hardy spirit of the masculine to sink within him:—scenes in the delineation of which I find my powers of description utterly fail me. Go with these messengers of mercy—enter with them the comfortless habitations of the indigent—habitations which are unable to defend them from the chill blasts of the winters tempest which is howling around their

dwelling. Behold the wretched mother stretched perhaps on a bed of straw—pale with hunger and shivering in the breeze—listen to the heart rending cries of her half famished freezing offspring:—do this, and your feelings will tell you more forcibly than I am able to do, how inadequate language is, to pourtray the miseries to which many of our fellow beings are subjected.

Brethren, I am not dealing to you in fancy. Did I suppose for a single moment, that I was placing before you a picture, which has no existence, but in the colourings of an ardent fancy, I should certainly hold my peace. But I have no such expectation,—no such belief. It is my firm conviction, my deliberate opinion, that much of the misery which exists around us has never yet been brought to light: that many are suffered to pine and want, and perhaps die, for want of some angel hand to minister to their necessities. The society which has this day been brought to your notice, has already done much: much to merit the gratitude, not only of the individuals benefitted, but of the community at large. They have taken the heavy burthen of searching the abodes of wretchedness, and of clothing the naked, on themselves. And they have discharged their duty faithfully.

With the proceeds of your former bounty, added to their own, they have with their own hands made more than three hundred and sixty garments. With these many individuals have been clothed, who must otherwise have suffered, perhaps perished by the inclemency of the season. Besides these, some have been supplied with the precious word of life. This is being useful on Gospel principles. Were it necessary to adduce proof of what I have asserted, it would be easy for me to appeal to facts. Yonder are many of the individuals, whose present appearance can testify that I have not exaggerated in my statement. With these facts before you brethren, you may rest assured that your bounty has not been misapplied. And while they continue to hold the word of God in their hands as the ruling principle of their actions, you have a sure pledge that it never will.

My dear young friends, it is far from my purpose on the present occasion to flatter, or to elevate you in your own estimation, by recounting what you have done. Standing as I now do in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, before whom I must give an account of this day's service, it would ill become me to degrade the sacred desk by descending to the

low arts of flattery. No, I must tell you plainly, there is a weight of responsibility resting upon you which might almost make the shoulders of angels bend. To you it belongs to see that the poor and the needy suffer not. The eyes of the public are upon you, they expect much, they demand much of you. Disappoint not their expectations—shew by your conduct, that you are fully equal to the arduous task you have undertaken. Let not difficulties affright—let not scenes of misery and distress deter you from your duty. Go on in your labours of love; and may the God of everlasting peace and mercy be ever with you, and for ever bless you.

But brethren, without your aid they can go no farther. Their funds are already exhausted. Though much has been done much yet remains to be done. The cry of the needy is still loud and pressing—the chill blasts of winter are still howling around their dreary habitations. Mothers are still weeping for their children—children are still shivering in the icy breeze. Something must be done. The cries of the helpless sufferers continually sigh upon the breeze and linger on the ear. They grow louder and louder—they pierce the heavens,—they penetrate the sanctuary of the living God—they demand of you brethren to come and help them. And what shall I tell them? I know you have already done much, much I trust, which is already noted down on the records of eternity. And are your tender mercies all exhausted? Have you not a single tear yet to shed over the wants of suffering humanity; a small pittance yet to bestow? And must I go back to them with this chilling message? Tell them that the sources of their comfort are dried up, that there is no more for them to expect? Must I tell the wretched mother, whose countenance, is already beginning to brighten with a gleam of hope, to go back into her comfortless hovel, to take back with her, her shivering offspring, and suffer, and pine, and die; for there is no more help for them? No brethren, I cannot, I dare not go back with this cheerless, this freezing message. And your countenances tell me that I shall not.

I have discharged my duty. Remember the eyes of God are upon you. His ministering Angels are in this assembly. Hovering around they mark your charity and carry the amount to the courts of Heaven. Let it be such, as not to make you blush, when you come, in the presence of an assembled universe, to stand before its tremendous bar. And may God of his infinite mercy add his blessing for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

REVIVALS OF RELIGION,

ARE frequent and of great interest; the Visitant delights to state the account thereof, that we may be sensible of the power of God over the heart, and may anxiously seek to become its subjects.

Extract of a Letter from Princeton, dated 27th February, 1817.

WITH regard to the revival in Newark, it is not in my power to give you many particulars, though we receive intelligence from there almost daily. The work commenced about five or six weeks ago, and has been extending with great rapidity, through every part of the town. I suppose, from the best intelligence which I have acquired, that there are from five to six hundred in the different classes of *conviction, alarm, comfort and joy* in believng. It is principally in *Dr. Richards'* congregation, though not entirely. In Elizabethtown a similar work commenced about three weeks ago, and has since become very powerful, and I believe extended pretty much through the town. It began in a school of young ladies, twenty of whom were seized with the most pungent convictions, in one night. Several of our students have been to both these places, and a letter has lately been received from Newark, containing a most affecting demand on the seminary for several more.

FROM THE CHRISTIAN HERALD.

FROM a letter written to a Christian friend in this city, it appears that a great work of divine grace is manifest in the town of Charlotte, in Vermont. Many of all ages and both sexes are anxiously inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. The work is peculiarly remarkable among children. In a school in that place the female teacher one afternoon discovered an unusual solemnity on the countenances of many of the children, gradually increased and spread throughout the whole school, to such a degree, that before it was dismissed, nearly every one was found bathed in tears, and exclaiming—"what shall we do to be saved."

Such incidents may be ascribed to other causes than real religion, and can doubtless be sometimes explained as the effects of mere human sympathy. But when they are followed by abiding concern for the attainment of the one thing needful, (as it is hoped is the case in many of the youth above mentioned) and when the peaceable fruits of righteousness are uniformly displayed in the future conduct and conversation, let us not be readily disposed to disregard the hand of the Almighty Agent, on account of the smallness of the subjects on which he operates, or the simplicity of the means which he is pleased to use to effect his gracious ends. Let us rather be inclined to adore the sovereign wisdom and goodness of the Spirit of grace who worketh in the hearts of the children of men both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and who hath declared that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he perfects praise.

*Extract of a Letter written at Jay, Essex County,
New-York, August 6th, 1816.*

"DEAR BROTHER....Agreeably to your request, we give you a sketch of the recent work of God in this place.—In November last, the travailing pains of Zion were discoverable in the fervent prayers of Christians and the groanings of the churches. When the evenings were of suitable length, conferences were instituted, houses of worship were filled, and people became exceedingly solemn. In December last, the

Lord displayed his power and grace by dispelling the darkness and breaking the chains of sin, bringing blind and captive sinners into the light and liberty of the Gospel. New converts from the age of eight to eighty were then found flocking in from every quarter, backsliders returning and sinners anxiously inquiring "what shall we do to be saved?" Indeed my brother, that was not only a very solemn time, but to the disciples of our blessed Redeemer a day of gladness and exceeding great joy.

The work progressed through the winter. It was not confined to the contracted limits of a single town, county or state. New-York, N. Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were blessed with its happy influence. The Lord reigneth let the earth rejoice.

From the first of December to the first of June, seventy nine were added to this church, a number to the Congregational, and a number to the Methodist church in this township. The small Baptist church at Northwest Bay have had an addition, in the above mentioned time, of seventy members, and considerable numbers have been added to all the churches throughout this. There is a great work of divine grace progressing northward of Plattsburg and Chazy, where a new church is about to be constituted.—Thus my brother, the Lord is riding forth triumphantly conquering, and to conquer.

DEVOTION

SUITED TO SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.

LORD, to whom if not to thee, shall the wretched fly for succour? To whom if not to thee, shall the tried heart, tried to the uttermost, pour out its sorrows. To thee who canst enable me to triumph over the weakness of nature, when harassed by cares, I shrink from the thorny path, thou hast ordained I should tread. To thee, who canst dart a ray of heavenly benignity through the gloom which envelops me, and display by its bright radiance, the blissful, if distant, views of christian hope. — O my God! Support thy weak creature through these trials, sooth her with these hopes. When recollection is a pang, and each passing hour a repetition of suffering, when the prospects of life are darkened, and temptation under the garb of tenderness and virtue would lead to sorrow, then fortify, O Saviour of men! the heart which is raised to thee for support, and animate it with those hopes, over which neither life nor death can draw a veil,

I believe in the great Almighty Ruler of the universe, and his unerring providence which governs, protects, and supports. with wisdom unfathomable, the system his power has created; — I believe that this frail body which now, in suffering, acts its little part on this earthly scene, shall be resigned to corruption, but that again united to the vital spark it is destined to an existence through the countless ages of eternity. I believe too, through the mercy of the Omnipotent Sovereign, and the example and mediation of a blessed Saviour, this existence may be as blissful as it is never ending.

May life and immortality then be mine! May happiness, ever-during, unchangeable, and inconceivably glorious, be the portion of a spirit whose powers are lost in the immensity of the idea, and whose now-confined faculties cannot explore the design of the next moment!

Father of mercies! what privileges hast thou allotted to thy creatures! Yet alas, from their weak bosoms instead of the

increase of gratitude; too often do the murmurs of impatience arise : and the sighs of discontent; for the mild breathings of praise.

Ye sorrows, under which my panting heart now mourns ; —ye trials, which call forth the tenderest feelings of nature, and awaken her most poignant regrets ;—ye evils, which have embittered the morn of life, and hang in threatening gloom over its early decline ; what are ye when compared with this blessed issue, that I should waste a pang upon you through your slow progression to the tomb ? In that inevitable period, will it throw a shade on the transporting prospects of immortal bliss, to look back on a comparative moment of suffering ? Will it lessen the rapturous hope of a re-union with the object of my fondest affections, to recollect that but few of the fleeting moments of sad mortality were spent together ? Ye sorrows, ye trials, ye evils of life, then will your stings have no power ; and, blessed permission of unbounded goodness ! —“All tears shall be wiped from all eyes,” and the sufferers of the earth, unite in gladness and joy to hail the eternal source of purity and bliss !

Be with thy creature, O Lord, I beseech thee, on the approaching solemn occasion, when by public profession of her faith in thee, she takes upon herself those promises which at her baptism united her to thy holy church. Strengthen her faith, enrich her with thy grace, and O enable her to see clearly the doctrines of salvation, on which that faith is grounded ; that so under thy blessing the religion of her education, may be the religion of her choice. O my God ! may no lightness of heart, no caprice of fancy, no sheltering in ceremonies without the vital power of holiness, influence her determination. And O may that clearness of belief which thou only canst give, dissipate the darkness which sometimes beclouds her researches, and may a ray of thy divine influence, O Saviour ! guide her to thee, to thy gospel, to thy mercy, to thy grace, and lead her through these, to life everlasting !

I presume, O my God! I presume to enter into covenant with thee, on this day, when in the eyes of thine all-seeing Majesty, I make public profession of my faith in thy word. Under an humble consciousness of my own unworthiness, I supplicate thy grace to preserve me from error; I supplicate thy love to uphold me through all trials;—I supplicate thy mercy to pardon all past frailties, all future wanderings from the light of thy truth. O may I never lose that small hold which I now have upon thee, and by which thou hast drawn me to seek thy face in righteousness; but may my weak faith be made strong in the renewed visitations of thy love; and may I ever be attentive to that still small voice of peace, which teacheth the listener the law of eternal life. O may that beam of heavenly light which has dawned upon my mind increase in radiance, till from the brightness of its rising the mists of uncertainty and doubt shall vanish, and the clouds of unbelief shall flee away!

Preserve me, O God, I beseech thee, preserve me in the hour of of weakness—through repeated trials thou hast upheld me; O continue thy support; for without it I should sink into the blackness of despair. Save me from the murmurs of impatience; save me from the presumption of complaint; save me from that despondency and weakness which sometimes overhang my hopes, and threaten to crush them into the abyss of darkness and doubt. O enable me to overlook all trials, to cast off all entanglements of this world, and keep my eye single to HIM, who trod the wine-press alone, and with his own power accomplished salvation for his people!

DOMESTIC.

DESTITUTE REGIONS.

[A paper has recently been read before the Religious Historical Society in Philadelphia, by the Rev. James R. Wilson, in which a brief account is given of the state of religion and morals among the mountaineers in the western parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia. The following extracts from this document, exhibit a state of society which calls loudly for increased Missionary exertions.]

THE belief in witchcraft is almost universal both among the Germans and Irish. They are remarkably superstitious. In the neighbourhood of Bedford, a tenant in order to prevent his landlord from renting to another the farm on which he lived, set afloat a rumor that the house was haunted. The tale was generally believed. Great numbers of people collected to hear the Ghost speak, and witness its exploits. Many tricks were played off on the multitude, clumsy indeed, but effectual for several weeks. To such extent did it spread, that the county officers interfered, and had a prosecution entered against the person who had been the means of producing this extraordinary excitement. Charms and incantations are very commonly employed for the cure of diseases, and to prevent or repel numerous dangers.

There are very few schools established for the education of children, and those which exist have been wretchedly organized and badly conducted. The compensation offered to teachers is so small that no good and competent masters can be procured. There are extensive districts containing a numerous and increasing population, in which there neither is, nor ever has been any kind of school. Multitudes of parents can neither read nor write. Indeed I have sometimes thought that in several counties, more than one half of the adults are unable to read. In many situations it would be nearly impossible at present to apply a suitable remedy for this evil. A neighbourhood often times does not contain as many inhabitants as would support a tutor. Families are sometimes

planted along narrow valleys, at such distances from each other, that a school could not be formed. Both of these impediments will be removed by time.—Those settlements, however, that are incapable of supporting a teacher are comparatively few, and embrace but a small part of the population. The greatest difficulty that presents itself is the unwillingness of those who are able to pay liberally for educating their children. I scarcely know of any plan, by which this evil can be surmounted, but by the interference of the State government. Compell them to pay for the support of teachers by a tax, and they will send their children to school. Those who have never been in the mountains can scarcely form any tolerable conception of the wretched state of the inhabitants in relation to learning. *I am persuaded there are thousands of people who never saw the Bible, nor any other book.* While they are increasing in wealth, while their farms are extensive, their orchards large, and in good order; while their houses in many instances are of brick, and their barns of stone, their moral state is growing worse.

The congressional district composed of Bedford, Somerset and Cambria counties, probably now embracing 40,000 inhabitants, has but one fixed pastor, a Mr. G——, of the German Calvinist church. Without doubt there are many thousands of people in this district who never heard a sermon.

I had in my family as a hired servant, a girl about 14 years of age. She was of Irish ancestry, and possessed as much natural understanding as girls of her age usually do, in things with which they are acquainted. I could not discover that she knew whether there was one God, or twenty Gods, or no God at all. To give this girl a knowledge of the christian system, such as those of her age should possess, would require many years—From all the knowledge which I have acquired of these people I think her a fair specimen of children of her age, in the mountains. A few Methodist and Baptist preachers, occasionally travel, and preach to these unfortunate human beings. But the members attached to those Societies are few indeed, and those few very poorly instructed.

The following anecdote is related by Mr. Wilson, to illustrate the indifference to religion which the new settlers acquire after a few years residence.

“A pious Irish mechanic travelling westward a few years ago, was invited by a person of his craft to unite with him in his establishment. The traveller, among other inquiries,

asked if there was any opportunity of hearing the gospel preached in that region. He answered in the negative. He said he had always been accustomed to enjoy the ordinances of the church in his native country, and he should think his situation most unhappy without that privilege, wherever he settled. "O!" said the mechanic's wife, "so did we, sir, when we first settled in the mountains. But we soon got used to it; and now we think nothing of it at all." This was perhaps a fair specimen of a great majority of the settlers who had been religiously educated."

While the situation of this people precluded them from the means of improvement, it also preserved them from many of the vices which prevail to the eastward and in a crowded population. Their wants compelled them to be industrious. The fine elastic atmosphere of the mountains, and the purity of the water which they drank, added to the simplicity of their mode of living, imparted a remarkably healthful tone to their physical constitution. The exercise, which the labours of the farm and the pleasures of the chase produced, happily developed all the physical powers of their constitution, and rendered them capable of enduring privations to an uncommon degree. The mountaineers are certainly the largest and stoutest men in the United States. The volunteers and regulars raised in the mountains during the late war, were larger than any other of the United States' troops. It was the mountaineers, with those rifles that had been employed, against the deer and the bear, who did such terrible execution at the battle of New-Orleans. They possess all the bodily force, all the muscular vigor of the North American Savage, without his dullness and indolence.

DIED—On the 16th of March, 1817, MR. PETER M. GREGORY, in the 20th year of his age, he attended worship on the 9th of March both parts of the day, at the Presbyterian church: on the 17th he became an inhabitant of another world. Never was there a more amiable or promising youth; It was necessary only to know, in order to love him. He has left a very bad, and is gone to a very good world. The improvement of this, and of similar events, may be seen in the introductory observations to this number..

**AN INGENIOUS EXPEDIENT ADOPTED BY A TEACHER TO
CURE IDLENESS.**

HAVING lately met with two instances of sloth, I resolved to show my displeasure in such a way as might afford hopes of a speedy and effectual reformation. I had some time before given directions to my gardner to part off a small piece of ground, and to leave it totally without culture. As a natural consequence it was soon covered with weeds. One day I conducted my boys thither, and in their presence I singled out the two delinquents, and commanded them to put on a cap which had in its front the following incscription. "Idleness will cover a man with rags." I then ordered them to walk about among the weeds for one hour in the view of the whole school; this punishment produced the desired effect:—The boys were reclaimed and are now among the most diligent of my pupils, reaping the reward of their subsequent assiduity; and I have never since had occasion to recur to a similar procedure. The place is named "Sluggard's corner." I have preserved it for the sole benefit of the rising generation; and all that I require will be a certificate from the parent or tutor of any youth, stating the bearer to be an idle boy, which will secure him a place in the "sluggard's corner," until he is reclaimed; and I will venture to express a hope, that even in the most obstinate cases, this will be effected in the space of two or three days.

FROM A LATE LONDON PAPER.

ON reading the works of the Rev. R. Cecil, late minister of St. John's Chapel, Bedford-Row, we met with an interesting piece of poetry, combining strong Christian feeling with powerful imagination; and as the volumes are likely only to fall into particular hands, we cannot forbear the pleasure of extracting most of the verses. Mr. Cecil wrote the verses and gave them to his wife, with a view to divert her sorrow and soothe her mind, on a child, only one month old, being removed at day-break, and whose countenance in death was most heavenly. The following are the verses:

“ Let me go ; for the day breaketh.”

Cease here longer to detain me,
 Fondest mother drown'd in wo ;
 Now thy kind caresses pain me :
 Morn advances—let me go.
 See yon orient streak appearing !
 Harbinger of endless day :
 Hark ! a voice the darkness cheering,
 Calls my new-born soul away !
 Lately launch'd a trembling stranger,
 On the world's wild boist'rous flood,
 Pierc'd with sorrow, toss'd with danger,
 Gladly I return to God.
 Now my cries will cease to grieve thee,
 Now my trembling heart finds rest :
 Kinder arms than thine receive me,
 Softer pillow than thy breast.

* * * * *

As through this calm and holy dawning,
 Silent glides my parting breath,
 To an everlasting morning—
 Gently close my eyes in death.
 Blessings, endless, richest blessings,
 Pour their streams upon my heart !
 Though no language yet possessing,
 Breathe my spirit ere we part.

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